Marina's Testimony Called Helpful in Death Plot Probe

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—Photo by The Times-Picayune.

LEAVING the Orleans Parish Grand Jury room at the Criminal Courts Building Thursday afternoon is Mrs. Marina Oswald Porter, being escorted by Deputy Criminal Sheriff Anthony Constanza. Behind the two is Assistant District Attorney Andrew Sciambra. Mrs. Porter, the remarried widow of accused presidential assassin Lee Harvey Oswald, testified before the grand jury for nearly three hours.

Oswald's Widow Quizzed Almost Three Hours

By ROBERT USSERY

Mrs. Marina Oswald Porter appeared before the Orleans Parish Grand Jury Thursday for nearly three hours, at least part of the time with District Attorney Jim Garrison, whose Kennedy death probe brought her to New Orleans.

When she left the jury room shorty after 5 p. m. she was escorted through a horde of newsmen by Assistant District Attorneys Andrew Sciambra and James L. Alcock.

Alcock said the jury would have no further need of the widow of accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald.

He said her testimony was helpful to Garrison's probe, but would not comment on how valuable he considered it.

However, when she was asked if she had contributed anything, the petite Mrs. Porter replied, "I don't think so," in a tiny, feminine voice.

ANOTHER WITNESS

Another probe witness, Kerry Lee Thornley, of Tampa, Fla., also spent several hours before the jury in the morning.

Thornley, a Marine Corps buddy of Oswald in the late 1950s, emerged from the jury room at the lunch break and told reporters he never saw Oswald again after June of 1959.

Garrison contends they were associated during the summer of 1963 when Thornley lived in the French Quarter.

During an interview following his appearance Thornley disagreed with Garrison on two issues.

Thornley said the Warren Commission was accused of not asking him if he knew Oswald in New Orleans.

"They did ask that, and I told them no," he said.

He also disagreed with Garrison's opinion that Oswald was a right-winger.

'COMMUNIST TYPE'

Thornley described Oswald as an "idle parlor Communist type."

"But when he became disillusioned with the Soviet Union, perhaps he changed his views. I never thought he was a rightist," he added.

Mrs. Porter arrived on the second floor of the Criminal Courts Building for the afternoon session at 2 p. m.

She, her husband, Kenneth Jess Porter, and Criminal Sheriff Louis A. Heyd Jr., were surrounded by a tangle of newsmen and photography equipment which accompanied them into the district attorney's office. The Porters pre-

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viously went to the jury room about 9 a. m. but left shortly after arriving.

An attractive woman with blue eyes and close-cut blonde hair, Mrs. Porter walked with her head high and with an unperturbed expression. She made no comment to newsmen.

A few minutes later she and Garrison were seen walking up the stairs leading to the third floor jury room.

DOOR IS GUARDED

A door leading to the stairway was guarded by criminal sheriff's deputies, and newsmen waited in the second floor hallway. Garrison reportedly entered the jury room with Mrs. Porter, but it was not known how long he stayed.

In another probe develop-

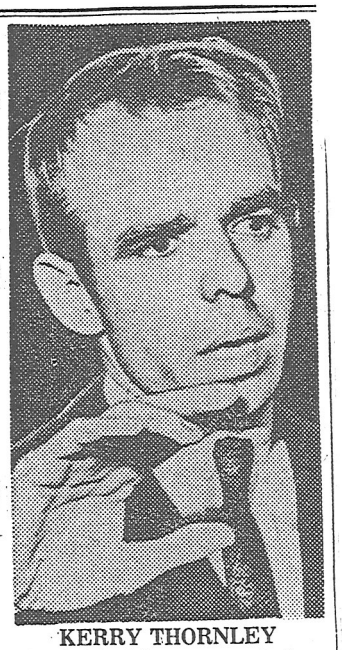
ment, attorney Dean A. Andrews took a pauper's oath before Criminal District Court Judge Frank J. Shea.

This allows his attorneys, John P. Dowling and Walter D. Kelly to get a free copy of the transcript of last August's trial before Judge Shea in which Andrews was convicted of perjury.

The transcript will be used in an appeal of the conviction and three-month sentence.

In another action, Thomas Beckham, who is scheduled to testify on Feb. 15, got permission to return to Nebraska.

Beckham, who was ordered to New Orleans by an Omaha judge last week, previously won a postponement of his grand jury appearance to Feb. 15 so he could confer with his attorneys.



KERRY THORNLEY
Oswald buddy appears before grand jury.

THREE MUSIC SHOWS

Beckham told Judge Matthew S. Braniff he must be present Saturday for three country music shows in Alliance, Neb., for which $4,000 worth of tickets have been sold.

There was no objection from the district attorney's office, but Judge Braniff said he would be held in contempt if he did not return.

Beckham was accompanied to the court by his brother and a bodyguard.

Mrs. Porter and Beckham fought their return to New Orleans. A Dallas judge ruled that Mrs. Porter was a "material and necessary" witness. She and her husband drove to New Orleans Wednesday.

Thornley at first said he would resist attempts to take him back, but changed his mind and arrived voluntarily Wednesday.

Beckham, who says he is a minister and a psychologist, is from the New Orleans area. Garrison reportedly wants to question him about his alleged association with deceased pilot David W. Ferrie.

Ferrie has been implicated in an alleged assassination conspiracy by Garrison.